



David Cates, a prose writer from Missoula, is the executive director of Missoula Medical Aid and leads groups of medical professionals on trips to Honduras, where he works to bring medical care to rural communities. He is also a part time faculty in the low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University, and he teaches writing in the Missoula high schools. He holds a BA in Journalism and an MFA in English/Creative Writing, both from UM Missoula.

He has written four novels, numerous short stories and an anthology of love poems.

David says, “In my writing I have tried over and over again to answer the universal question of what it means to be a human being. Or if not to answer it, to at least participate in the conversation. Like all people, in all cultures, in all times, my characters try to find meaning and dignity when faced with their mortality and inevitable suffering. We do not all win the Super Bowl. We do all suffer and die. Since those are the only two guarantees we have, the universal questions facing all of us have always been, Why? and What For? How people answer those questions is what I am interested in as a writer.”

The review panel considered David’s work to be “unpredictable and adventurous.” They greatly admired what he does with language. “He tackles many formats with ease and freedom.” His subject matter is “startling and wonderful.” The panel felt, “He takes on big themes but doesn’t neglect the good story in it.”

David says, “For me writing stories is the most human of human work. I do it to help me understand mysteries like love, courage, right and wrong, good and evil, and the unpredictable growth and development of individual characters. I do it because I don’t know how to be human without thinking about these things, and the only way to think about them for me is through stories.”